

# ERS REPORT

## Student Absenteeism

Educational Research Service, Inc.

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Second Printing—April 1978





**Educational Research Service, Inc.**

1800 North Kent Street  
Arlington, Virginia 22209  
Phone: (703) 243-2100

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Study Conducted and Reported By Paul J. Porwoll

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Price of publication: \$8.50. To ERS subscribers: single copy mailed routinely as part of subscription; additional copies, half price.

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# FOREWORD

Student absenteeism is a major problem in many schools and school systems. On an average day 3.5 million students, or eight percent of those enrolled in the nation's public schools, are absent from school. Many students rarely miss school; for example, in June 1977, a student graduated from Edward H. White Senior High School in Jacksonville, Florida, without missing a single day of school in 12 years. In contrast, some students are absent from school more often than they are present. In some cases, schools report that over 30 percent of the student body may be absent on a single day.

Why is this occurring? How detrimental to pupil learning is chronic absenteeism? What are schools doing to encourage better attendance? How successful are these programs?

This ERS Report attempts to answer these questions by summarizing recent research on factors relating to excessive absenteeism, the effects of absenteeism on pupil achievement, and the effects of instruction, positive reinforcement, and parent-school involvement on attendance. Actual proposals, policies, and programs from school systems across the country also are included.

ERS expresses appreciation to those administrators who provided materials for this Report. It is hoped that this study will help school officials, teachers, and others in improving pupil attendance in schools.

Glen Robinson  
Director of Research  
Educational Research Service





# Introduction

Student absenteeism was listed as the number one headache in the daily administration of the schools, according to a random sample of 500 members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 1973, 1974, and 1975. (Only vandalism outranked absenteeism as their biggest concern in the 1976 poll.) Truancy and excessive absenteeism influence an entire spectrum, from pupils whose education is affected, to teachers whose instruction is disrupted, principals who must account for empty desks, superintendents who must rely on attendance for state aid, attendance officers, home-school counselors and law enforcement officials who must contact the parents and locate the absent students, judges who occasionally rule on truancy cases, and merchants who complain of daytime financial losses due to adolescent loitering and misbehavior.

How many students are out of school?  
Who are truants? Why do they stay away from school? Does absence affect achievement? What can be done to decrease absenteeism? This ERS Report deals with these questions by summarizing research on absenteeism and by

providing policies, procedures, and programs that are being used by school systems to combat excessive absenteeism in schools.

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The National Center for Education Statistics, a division of the U.S. Office of Education, has published historical data on public school attendance from 1929 to 1976. Data in Table 1 show that the percentages of enrolled students daily attending school has risen continually during this period--from 82.8 percent in school year 1929-30 to an estimated 92.3 percent in the 1975-76 school year. From Fall 1970 to Fall 1975 the average percent of average daily attendance (ADA) to enrollment has been 92.1. Thus, taken as an aggregate, approximately 8 percent of the enrolled students in the United States are absent from school each day.

Given these figures, what then is considered a "normal" rate of absenteeism? In "Student Attendance and Absenteeism," the NASSP states that health officials estimate a normal rate of pupil absence due to illness



TABLE 1.--Relationship of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to Enrollment  
in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1929-30 to 1975-76.<sup>1/</sup>

Year	Enrollment <sup>2/</sup> (in thousands)	ADA (in thousands)	ADA as Percent of Enrollment
1929-30	25,678	21,265	82.8
1931-32	26,275	22,245	84.7
1933-34	26,434	22,458	85.0
1935-36	26,367	22,299	84.6
1937-38	25,975	22,298	85.8
1939-40	25,434	22,042	86.7
1941-42	24,562	21,031	85.6
1943-44	23,267	19,603	84.3
1945-46	23,300	19,849	85.2
1947-48	23,945	20,910	87.3
1949-50	25,111	22,284	88.7
1951-52	26,563	23,257	87.6
1953-54	28,836	25,644	88.9
1955-56	31,163	27,740	89.0
1957-58	33,529	29,722	88.6
1959-60	36,087	32,477	90.0
1961-62	38,253	34,682	90.7
1963-64	41,025	37,405	91.2
1965-66	42,835	39,154	91.4
1967-68	43,891	40,828	93.0
1969-70	45,619	41,934	91.9
1970-71	45,909	42,459 <sup>3/</sup>	92.5
1971-72	46,081	42,254	91.7
1972-73	45,744	42,408 <sup>3/</sup>	92.7
1973-74	45,409	41,438 <sup>3/</sup>	91.3
1974-75	45,053	41,405 <sup>3/</sup>	91.9
1975-76	44,838	41,373 <sup>3/</sup>	92.3

<sup>1/</sup> Biennial data from 1929-30 to 1973-74 are contained in *Statistics of State School Systems*. Annual figures, taken from *Statistics of Public Schools* and *Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools*, were inserted for the 1970-71, 1972-73, 1974-75, and 1975-76 school years.

<sup>2/</sup> Membership as of October 1, beginning in 1967-68.

<sup>3/</sup> Estimated

NOTE: Includes Alaska and Hawaii, beginning in 1959-60.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Statistics of State School Systems, 1973-74* (1976), p. 7. *Statistics of Public Schools, Fall 1970* (March 1971), p. 16. *Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools, Fall 1971* (1971), p. 16; *Fall 1972* (1973), p. 16; *Fall 1973* (1974), p. 16; *Fall 1974* (1975), p. 16; *Fall 1975* (1976), p. 22.

to be around 4-5 percent a year, based on 7-9 days absent in a 180-day school year. Long-term illnesses would figure only minimally, accounting for less than one percent a year of the total enrollment. [61:1]\*

In many areas, however, absentee rates average 10-15 percent, with the problem most acute in urban schools. Some inner-city schools have registered absenteeism rates of 30 percent or more. For example, Benjamin Franklin High School had New York City's lowest attendance rate in 1974--48 percent. [115:5]

Baltimore schools are faced with a 30,000 pupil absentee rate per day, according to a Baltimore *Evening Sun* article by Stephen McKerrow. In December 1975, he estimated that by June 1976 "35,000 or more students will have missed 40 or more days, almost one-quarter of the class year, and a large number will have missed many more." [101:i] Through Project AIM (Attendance Improvement Monitoring), the Baltimore City Public Schools have attempted to curb excessive absenteeism

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\*References cited in the text are noted by numbers within brackets. The number before the colon indicates the entry number within the bibliography beginning on page 46; the number following the colon indicates the page within the entry. Where no colon appears, the citation refers to the entire entry. Multiple citations are separated by semicolons.

in 12 of its junior and senior high schools--which averaged 71 percent attendance as of December 1975.

Ten schools targeted as having high rates of absenteeism in the New Orleans Public Schools were the focus of its TRAC (Total Reduction of Absenteeism of Children) program. These schools averaged 78 percent attendance in 1974-75. [113:3]

#### NORMS BY SEX AND GRADE

Analyzing attendance data in a rural Minnesota county, R. G. Stennett (1967) was able to plot trends in absenteeism by sex and grade level. He found boys to be better attenders than girls in every grade but kindergarten, and noticed distinct changes in the median number of days absent from kindergarten through twelfth grade. From grades K-4 absences decreased dramatically; from 4-6, stayed constant; at grade 7, fell sharply; from grades 8-10, again remained steady; and rose significantly until grade 12. Stennett hypothesizes that these trends may be due to decreases in the frequency of childhood diseases from K-4, the presence of attendance-conscious principals and assistant principals at the junior high school level, and the end of compulsory education requirements by grades 11-12. [57]



## Summary of Research on Student Absenteeism

The following section delineates the research on student absenteeism according to five categories: (1) factors relating to excessive absenteeism, (2) effects of absenteeism on achievement, (3) effects of instruction on attendance, (4) effects of positive reinforcement on attendance, and (5) effects of parent-school involvement on attendance. Much of this research has been conducted in urban or inner-city settings where chronic absenteeism is greatest.

### FACTORS RELATING TO EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM

Causes of excessive absenteeism and truancy can be traced to the student's own personal and family life, his or her social and economic environment, and the atmosphere found at school. A number of reasons explaining absenteeism as related to these areas can be found in the literature:

#### I. In-School Factors

##### A. Staff

1. Unsatisfactory relations between the school staff and the student and his/her parents
2. Personality conflicts with teachers
3. Ineffective teaching
4. Lack of teacher training programs
5. Inadequate or poor staff direction and supervision
6. Unsound teacher/staff attitude toward attendance

#### B. Instruction

1. Poor learning environment
2. Inadequate program selection
3. Poor educational preparation
4. Lack of personal achievement and responsibility
5. Perceived inequity of school reward structure
6. No personal identification with school assignments
7. Task and subject repetitiveness
8. Little variety in class scheduling
9. Arbitrary and inappropriate curricula and standards
10. Fragmentation of instruction due to absences of regular teachers

#### C. Other

1. Unclear school duties and responsibilities
2. Ineffective grievance procedures
3. Ineffective attendance monitoring system
4. Inappropriate student transfer policies and procedures.

### II. Personal and Family Factors

#### A. Personal

1. Illness
2. Accident
3. Lack of motivation
4. Poor self-image or other personality conflicts
5. Physical, mental, emotional handicaps
6. Learning disabilities
7. Disregard for the seriousness of unexcused absences

#### B. Parental

1. Marital problems in the home
2. Unfavorable parental opinion towards school
3. Erosion of parental control

## C. Social

1. Race and ethnic group status
2. Religious or ethnic holidays
3. Over-ageness in grade
4. Habits--drugs, alcohol, etc.
5. Peer pressures

## D. Monetary

1. Economic status
2. Need to seek employment

## E. Other

1. Household or parental duties
2. Recreational activities
3. Winter vacations
4. Novel life-styles

## III. General Environmental Factors

1. Inadequate means of transportation
  2. Lack of facilities for child care, care of the aged and sick
  3. Lack of business, governmental, medical, and personal services at convenient out-of-school hours
  4. Inclement weather conditions
  5. Strong competition from community events and out-of-building educational opportunities.
- [32:393; 42:5-7; 61:2]

Studies of General Problems

John S. Wright (1976) examined factors related to school attendance in Virginia. Data were gathered from two sources: (1) all high school principals in the state were asked to supply some information on their school's curriculum, organization, and its staff; and (2) the superintendent in each school system in the state was requested to furnish high school attendance figures for school year 1974-75. Each school system was categorized according to the U.S. Census Bureau's method of defining population density--urban, suburban, and other. Certain relationships between school attendance and selected variables were found significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Attendance was associated *positively* with:

1. percentage of state required courses offered as "phase" electives (i.e., for less than a full year) (.1453)\*

Attendance was associated *negatively* with:

1. population density (-.2789)\*
2. school size (-.2427)\*
3. pupil-teacher ratio (-.1630)\*
4. scope of elective offerings(-.1884)\*
5. number of elective offerings (-.1684)\*

\*correlation coefficients

Wright comments that, contrary to predictions of positive correlation between scope and number of elective offerings with the attendance rate, the negative association found in this study may be attributed to an intercorrelation of these two variables with area and school size. [74]

Joseph Levanto (1975) attempted to discover what factors led to attendance problems at a large Connecticut high school. Data on 2,900 students' attendance and grades were taken from individual student records and from information given by students related to their home environment. An "absence" was treated as an entire day away from school; no distinctions were made between excused and unexcused absences. Levanto found that the lowest periods of absence occurred on Wednesdays and Thursdays and on days of important examinations, while high rates of absenteeism were associated with Mondays and Fridays and half-day classes given prior to vacations at Thanksgiving and Christmas. After the third week of the school year, absenteeism continually increased. From eleven student background variables analyzed, the following results on the rates of absenteeism were noted:

Higher Rates of Absenteeism

- older students
- black students



- girls in grades 9-11  
boys in grade 12
- students in upper grades
- students living with one parent
- students in the general program  
of study (followed by those in  
business education)
- students with lower IQ scores  
(seniors)
- students with lower class rank  
(seniors)
- students not participating in  
school-sponsored activities
- students claiming no religion  
(followed, in descending order,  
by Protestants, other religions,  
and Catholics)
- students with poor personality  
ratings from teachers

#### Lower Rates of Absenteeism

- younger students
- white students
- boys in grades 9-11  
girls in grade 12
- students in lower grades
- students living with both parents
- students in the college prep  
program
- students with higher IQ scores  
(seniors)
- students with higher class rank  
(seniors)
- students participating in school-  
sponsored activities
- Jewish students
- students with good personality  
ratings from teachers [43:102; 60]

Nancy L. Karweit (1973) examined factors related to school absence for the Center for Social Organization of Schools at The Johns Hopkins University. In a pilot study of seventh graders at a new junior high school in Baltimore, a computerized attendance monitoring system was developed to help lower the daily absence rate of 12-20 percent. In addition, a letter was sent to the parents of 796 students who had been absent for three

days or more or late five days or more in a fifteen-day period. In the four days after the mailing, the problem group's attendance did not change significantly, even though a school fair was held that week. [40:9-18]

After correcting and improving certain aspects of the attendance monitoring system, Karweit then conducted another study on a small (1,100 students) all-girl senior high school in Baltimore. Data were drawn from many sources: (1) daily attendance figures were collected from the computerized monitoring system; (2) a student questionnaire obtained information on student attitudes toward attendance, modes, and length of travel to school, and whether this was the closest high school to their home; (3) 50 students were interviewed to gather in-depth reasons for school absence; (4) a questionnaire administered to teachers and staff determined their attitudes toward student attendance and the new monitoring system; (5) information on students' grades, previous attendance problems, conduct grades, age, and curriculum were collected for two semesters; and (6) a daily weather log was maintained. No distinction was made between excused and unexcused absences. [40:18-30] Karweit reports that absence from school was significantly greater

- on Mondays and Fridays (Monday absences were seen related to external factors, such as problems or emergencies at home, while Friday absences were caused by the school situation and students' attitudes toward school, grades or teacher.)
- on rainy days.
- at the end of the school year (Absences were more frequent in number and length at this time.)



- for students riding the bus to school versus those walking or driving.
- for students who are mothers with infants at home.
- for students who receive lower grades. [40:30-35, 37-44, 53-57]

Other findings:

- Attending a school closest to home and travel time involved in getting to school were not significantly related to absenteeism.
- Students who said they attend a particular school for the special courses it offers were better attenders than those citing other reasons for attending the school. (The school studied is a magnet center for business education.)
- Contacting parents about their children's attendance problems was not helpful in reducing absenteeism.
- More "visible" students (those who received special nonacademic honors and distinctions) were better attenders. [40:37-59]

Karweit used regression analyses to find the relative importance of these variables on *total* and *daily* attendance at school. Strong relations were noted between school rewards (grades) and total absenteeism and between the day of the week and daily absenteeism. [40:62-68]

An analysis of students who had greater than a 10 percent absentee rate at Mariner High School in Mukilteo, Washington, yielded the following factors associated with student nonattendance:

- Three out of every four absences occurred on Monday or Friday.
- Students were absent from school on days after vacations.
- Students were average or above average in intelligence but below average in achievement.
- Students were enrolled in the general, rather than the academic, vocational, or "specialized" curriculum
- Students were not employed.
- Students were not involved in school-sponsored activities.
- Students did not eat breakfast on days they did come to school. [29:2]

#### Studies of Specific Factors

Sandra Z. Williamson (1970) researched the effects of *maternal employment* on the academic achievement of seventh grade pupils enrolled in a middle-class school. Only children with complete records available for grades 1-6 could participate in the study. An "employed" mother was defined as one who had worked at a 40 hour-a-week job until her child left grade six, while a "nonemployed" mother had not worked outside the home at all while her child was in the first six grades. From the results of a questionnaire, 40 employed mothers and their children and 40 nonemployed mothers and their children were chosen as the sample groups. The findings indicate that no significant differences were associated between these two groups of mothers and their children in reading achievement scores, grade point average, absenteeism,

IQ, conduct scores, education of the mother, and other variables examined. The mother's attitude toward her work status was seen as the key to her child's academic achievement. [72]

The effects of *air pollution* on the attendance of a sample of California fourth, fifth, and sixth grade pupils were the focus of research by Irene B. Bury (1970). A test group of 431 children in San Bernardino (an area of frequent air pollution) and a control group of 434 pupils in relatively smog-free Victorville served as the population of the study. Attendance records and information on weather patterns and types of pollutants present in the San Bernardino area were analyzed. On fifty separate days during the ten-week test period, oxidant levels in the air in San Bernardino exceeded California air quality standards. The test group, Bury found, was absent 143 more times (or 22 percent more) than the control group. The rate of absenteeism between the two groups was significant at the .05 level. [11]

Allen H. Frerichs (1969) investigated the relationship between school absence and *psychosomatic ailments* in two urban, mid-western elementary schools. Sixth graders were used in the study because, as they move into adolescence, children of this age face increasing amounts of anxiety as adults begin to perceive them differently. Twenty-eight children comprised the High Absence Group (absent at least three days in each of the three previous semesters) and 29 pupils with the best attendance record for the three previous semesters made up the Low Absence Group. The groups were compared to see if they differed on the number of psychosomatic ailments. Each pupil was then asked 10 questions from Rosenberg's

*Psychosomatic Symptom Scale* related to frequency of nail biting, sweating, nervousness, difficulty of sleeping, etc. Seventy percent of the children in the High Absence Group and 26 percent of those in the Low Absence Group answered positively (i.e., "often" or "sometimes") to four or more of the 10 questions. Frerichs portrays the typical child revealing psychosomatic symptoms in this study as a boy with a low rate of attendance, above average IQ, and below average achievement in school. The condition is even worse if the student comes from a broken home. [27]

In studying how *socioeconomic factors* affect the school achievement of Spanish-speaking first graders, Robert W. Macmillan (1968) investigated the relationships among the occupation of the mother or father (whoever was the major wage earner), family size and organization, sex of the child, preschool experience, and attendance record. Results of the *Metropolitan Readiness Test* (Form A) determined pupil achievement. Data on first graders with Spanish surnames were gathered from 16 San Antonio (Texas) elementary schools. Attendance data also were collected for blacks, and upper-class and middle-class Anglos. When all the variables were taken separately, achievement was related significantly to parent's occupation and attendance. A significant association between attendance and parent's occupation was the only correlation that occurred when attendance was analyzed in relation to the other variables. Best attenders were Anglos, followed by Mexican-Americans and blacks. [44]

James E. Greene (1963) examined the best and worst attenders in two Atlanta (Georgia) public high schools—one located in an *economically advantaged* area, the other in an *economically disadvantaged* area. "Best attenders" were 10 percent of the students in each grade



level, classified by sex, with the least number of absences during the semester prior to the study, and "worst attenders" were the 10 percent having the greatest number of absences during this period. The two groups

were compared on the basis of scores on a series of psychological tests and miscellaneous demographic data such as age and grades received. Results in the following areas were tabulated:

<u>Area</u>	<u>School in Economically Advantaged Area</u>	<u>School in Economically Disadvantaged Area</u>
1. Problem Sensitivity	Not significantly associated with girls; best attending boys scored lower than worst attending boys	Worst attending boys scored higher than best attending boys; best attending girls scored lower than worst attending girls
2. Self-Assessed Status and Aspirations	Best attending boys and girls had significantly more favorable self-ratings than worst attending boys and girls	Not significantly associated with boys; best attending girls had significantly favorable self-ratings
3. Standardized Measures of Adjustment	Not significantly associated with boys; best attending girls had significantly favorable scores on health, emotional, and general adjustment	Not significantly associated with boys; best attending girls had significantly favorable scores on health, emotional, and general adjustment
4. Miscellaneous Variables	Best attending boys and girls positively associated with high English grades	Best attending boys and girls associated with comparatively high IQ's, high English grades, socioeconomic status, and favorable parental opinion of the school [32]

In studying *environmental factors* related to school attendance in eight white high schools in two rural Louisiana parishes, Alvin L. Bertrand and Marion B. Smith (1960) administered three questionnaires to juniors, seniors, and their parents. Attendance and dropout data from the high schools also were analyzed. Twenty of 31 boys who had dropped out indicated that they did so because of "lack of interest"; 19 of 35 girls who had left school cited "marriage" as their main reason. Youth who left school exhibited the following characteristics:

- Their fathers tended to perform wage work, as farmers or farm laborers.

- Their mothers had less education than mothers of youth attending school.
- Distance between home and school was significantly associated with attendance.
- Dropouts had less employment experience, lower grades, and aspirations, and were poorer than their counterparts in school. [5:40-43]

From their results, Bertrand and Smith believe that while in school, dropouts perceived themselves to be in a strange and unfamiliar social setting. Moreover, dropouts' educational opportunities were further biased



because their parents consider education to have little value. [5:40-43]

#### EFFECTS OF ABSENTEEISM ON ACHIEVEMENT

In the introduction to "The Relationship Between Absenteeism and Grades," Richard M. Rozelle indicates that the research in this area is inconclusive [54]. The results of 12 studies conducted from 1925 to 1960 indicate significant relationships between absence and grades when measured in the same term. [3; 4; 12; 17; 21; 23; 35; 38; 55; 63; 70; 75] However, 12 other studies administered from 1923 to 1962 could find no relationship between absence and grades. [13; 19; 24; 25; 33; 37; 47; 48; 49; 51; 58; 73] This summary will focus on more recent research on the absenteeism-achievement relationship.

Anita A. Summers and Barbara L. Wolfe (1975), economists with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, report the findings of

a production-function study attempting to isolate the school resources which help learning in the Philadelphia public schools. The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* were used to measure the achievement of 627 students in 103 elementary schools between the end of the third and sixth grades and 553 students in 42 schools between the end of the sixth and eighth grades. Three tests (*Cooperative School and College Abilities Test*, *California Achievement Test*, and *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*) measured the achievement of 716 students in five senior high schools between the ninth and twelfth grades. The typical student analyzed comes from a family with less than \$10,000 annual income; moreover, one fourth of the black students come from families averaging less than \$6,000 a year. All students, from elementary through senior high school, averaged achievement scores well below grade level. [59:5, 7] For the variables "unexcused absences," "latenesses," and "days present," Summers and Wolfe obtained the following results:

#### 1. Sixth grade

- Unexcused absences

Unexcused absences have a negative effect on achievement. The negative effect is greater for the more advantaged students, higher income, and White students. Five additional absences per year for a student whose family income is \$10,000 means a decline in growth of 2.13 months, while for a student whose family income is \$7,000, the five additional unexcused absences mean a 1.32 months decline in achievement growth.

- Latenesses

Latenesses have a negative effect on achievement growth. The effect is greatest for low-income pupils. Five more latenesses per year means 2.9 months less growth to a pupil whose family income is \$5,000 and 1.2 months less achievement growth for a student whose family income is \$8,000. [59:24]

#### 2. Eighth grade

- Unexcused absences

Unexcused absences have a negative effect on those who scored at 5.0 and above on the sixth grade test, and the effect is greater for higher achievers. Five more unexcused absences per year means .78 months less growth to a pupil who scored 5.0, 1.69 months less growth to a pupil who scored at grade level (6.8), and 2.30 months less growth to a pupil who scored above grade level (at 8.0). The effect is also more negative as a pupil's income increases.

- Days present

For all pupils, 10 additional days present means .53 months more achievement growth. [59:26]

### 3. Twelfth grade

- Unexcused absences

Unexcused absences have a negative effect on achievement. Five more unexcused absences per year means .4 national percentile points less growth in achievement.

- Latenesses

Latenesses have a negative effect on achievement and the effect is stronger for higher achievers. At the ninth grade average (23 percent), five more latenesses means .5 percentile points less growth. At 40 percent, five latenesses means 1.1 percentile points less growth. [59:28]

The Summers and Wolfe study has been challenged by the Philadelphia School District's Office of Research and Evaluation which contends that the data used were too limited in scope to be statistically valid. [52] Nevertheless, Summers and Wolfe still uphold their conviction that "the broad findings . . . are firm enough in this study and supported enough by other studies to warrant confidence." [52]

Using input indicators related to student background, community, and school staff characteristics, J. Robert Coldiron and Eugene W. Skiffington (1975) attempted to measure student progress toward ten goals of quality education in Pennsylvania. Cognitive and non-cognitive output measures were administered to fifth and eleventh graders during the four school years from 1969-70 to 1972-73. Sources of the data on the indicator "school attendance" were taken from students and school and state department records. Coldiron and Skiffington found that at the elementary level school attendance was not associated with achievement; higher attendance at the secondary level, however, was related to a more responsible attitude, enjoyment of school, and success in a school setting. There may be two reasons, the authors conclude, for the discrepancy in fifth and eleventh grade scores: (1) students who show little interest in school and fail to master basic verbal and math skills may have dropped

out of school by the eleventh grade; and (2) a more probable reason for this lack of a significant relationship at the fifth grade level may be the low variability in attendance at this grade level. [14:36-37]

In an analysis of data on quantity of schooling and pupil achievement, David E. Wiley and Annegret Harnischfeger (1974) attempt to "explode the myth" that school has little or no effect on its students. They calculate that the quantity of schooling (the average number of hours per pupil in a school) is equal to the average daily attendance multiplied by the number of hours in a school day and the number of days in the school year. By this formula, the amount of pupil exposure to school may vary widely, "ranging, e.g., in the Detroit EEOS [*Equality of Educational Opportunity* study by James Coleman and others (15)] data from 710 to 1150 hours." [71:8] The authors then construct a model in which exposure to school acts as a mediating variable between student background characteristics and achievement. Next, data were analyzed from the EEOS sixth grade sample of metropolitan Detroit. Three output measures were used: verbal ability, reading comprehension, and mathematics achievement. Three background variables denoted the student's race, number of possessions in the student's home, and the number



of children living at home. The results of their regression analysis indicate that:

In terms of typical gains in achievement over a year's period, we concluded that in schools where students receive 24 percent more schooling, they will increase their average gain in reading comprehension by two-thirds and their gains in mathematics and verbal skills by more than one-third. These tremendous effects indicate that the amount of schooling a child receives is a highly relevant factor for his achievement. [71:9]

Applying the above results to 1969-70 school statistics (see Table 2), Wiley and Harnischfeger showed that students in Maryland going to school for 182.7 days per year in 1969-70 were exposed to 10.1 days or 5.9 percent more schooling than students in Vermont who went to school only 172.6 days per year. In terms of this model, pupils in Vermont in 1969-70 gained 17.1 percent less in reading comprehension than pupils in Maryland. Comparing the length of the average school year and ADA in Iowa and Missouri, Iowa pupils have access to 16.4 percent more schooling and would gain 45.8 percent more in reading comprehension than do Missouri school children.

Regarding the policy implications of their work, the authors fear that shortening the school day or year would lead to corresponding losses in pupil achievement and "advocate more time for those who need it, so that more equal individual benefits of schooling will be obtained." [71:12]

Nancy Karweit (1975) investigated the impact of the quantity of schooling on achievement by using several data sources measuring differential access to school in terms of attendance rates, length of school term, and hours in the school day. Since most of the research on school effects uses *school* level variables as indicators of school resources, Karweit attempted to

determine how much differential access to school resources *individual* students have. Data on the sixth and twelfth grades from the Coleman study [15] and from the McDill and Rigsby survey [45] of 20 high schools were used in order to replicate and extend the research of Wiley and Harnischfeger and others. A model was constructed to link individual student background factors, school features, and achievement results with differential access to school, as measured by attendance. When numerous versions of the model were tried using data at both the individual and school levels, attendance was found to exert only a minor effect on achievement. Attendance for nonwhites was more important than for whites, though not significantly so. Karweit admits that some of the measures used in her study may be of "questionable reliability" but contends that the purpose of her work is "a preliminary attempt to introduce some variation into the measurement of school effects, a procedure which seems reasonable before concluding that schools 'make no difference.'" [39:26]

Writing for the New York State Education Department, John J. Heim (1973) found that of the six studies he reviewed, pupil absenteeism had a negative impact on achievement in four of them. Since the studies attempted to control for socioeconomic status (a factor outside the school setting), he declares that "the relationship found between absenteeism and student achievement at least partially results from variations in the schools' policy toward absenteeism." [34:14-15]

Frank H. Jenne (1973) conducted an attendance experiment on 34 juniors and seniors in his Temple University health science class. He gave every student a list of study questions and indicated that the answers could be found in the required text.



TABLE 2.--Selected Statistics for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools  
for Four States (1969/70)

State	Enrollment	Mean Length of School Year	ADA as Percent of Enrollment	Days Attended/ Pupil Enrolled	Expendi- ture*/Pu- pil ADA (\$)	Total Expenditure* (Mil. \$)
Vermont	101,262	172.6	96.6	166.6	934	101
Maryland	924,257	182.7	85.0	155.4	882	929
Iowa	660,409	180.0	94.5	170.2	890	650
Missouri	1,078,347	174.0	84.0	146.2	714	822

\*Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1970.

NOTE: The total expenditure figures vary somewhat from estimates that could be calculated from the figures on enrollment, ADA, and expenditure per pupil, because of differences in sources.

SOURCE: *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1972.

SOURCE: Wiley, David E. and Annegret Harnischfeger. "Explosion of a Myth: Quantity of Schooling and Exposure to Schooling, Major Educational Vehicles," *Educational Researcher*, 3 (April 1974), p. 9. Copyright 1974, American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

The class was told that a sample of these questions, reworded, would appear later on the examinations. Students' attendance was not required and would not affect their grades. Residual gain scores were taken from the results of a pretest and class exams. Jenne found that students' grades were related significantly to attendance, though residual gains were not associated with individual grade point averages and attendance. [36]

Richard Rozelle (1968) gathered three years of student grade and attendance records at Evanston Township High School (Illinois) to determine if poor attendance causes lower grades or low grades result in subsequent poor attendance. Data were taken from 12,330 grade and attendance records. Six subject area combinations offered at the school were analyzed:

- first year foreign languages
- second and third year foreign languages
- combined studies, English, and social studies
- science courses
- Mathematics
- all of the above courses [54:1153]

The Cross-Lagged Panel Correlation Technique was used to measure variables at different points in time to compare the magnitude of preceding and subsequent relationships. Rozelle's results, although not conclusively confirming or refuting his hypothesis, pointed toward poor attendance causing subsequent low grades. [54:1156]

J. W. B. Douglas and J. M. Ross (1965) used information from the National Survey of Health and Development to study the effects of absenteeism on the achievement of British primary school children. Absence records

were collected on children between the ages 6½ and 10½ who also had test information at 8 and 11 years. Frequency and time of absence were grouped into seven categories; the children's socioeconomic class status ranged from lower and upper middle-class to lower and upper manual working class. The researchers found that for children of upper middle-class background, amount and age distribution of absences were not significantly correlated with mental ability and school achievement test scores given in the eleventh year. Yet children in all other social classes who are constantly absent or frequently absent during the last two years in primary school score poorly at age 11, with scores deteriorating between ages 8 and 11. Generally, scores improve when children who are often absent during the first two years at primary school improve their later attendance habits--but not if the children come from lower manual working class families or attend inferior primary schools. [20]

#### EFFECTS OF INSTRUCTION ON ATTENDANCE

Other research has focused on attempts to improve attendance by revamping or innovating the instructional program.

Layman E. Allen and Dana B. Main (1976) used a problem-generating mathematics game to increase the attendance of seventh and eighth grade math classes in an inner-city Detroit middle school. Experimental and control classes were taught by the same teachers for both semesters of the 1972-73 academic year. Besides receiving regular math instruction, the experimental group participated in the *Equations* game, where classes were organized into teams with a tournament held twice each week. Student attitude toward this new atmosphere was measured by the absentee rate.

Results indicate that:

- The mean absentee rate in non-games was more than three times greater than in games classes.
- The mean absentee rate for students who changed from games classes in the first semester to non-games classes in the second semester almost doubled.
- Any carryover effect for decreasing absence in the second semester non-games class for a student participating in a games class in the first semester was tenuous.
- The gaming techniques used had an impact in the affective domain as well since the game fostered cooperative team activities, the players were matched evenly, and both fast and slow students got a share of winning and losing. [2]

Curtis Lee Smiley (1973) analyzed the effects of compulsory versus noncompulsory attendance on achievement in a secondary level biology class using the *Systems Approach to Biology*. Students were given the *Nelson Biology Test* as a pre- and post-test. Attendance was found to have no significant effect on performance when students were divided into high and low ability groups. [56]

Investigating the impact of black studies on black pupils' self-concept, achievement, and attendance, Carl A. Grant (1973) used 998 children in 16 third grade and 23 sixth grade inner-city classes in a large urban school system as his sample. The *How I Feel About Myself Inventory*, the *Metropolitan Reading Test*, and the *Attendance Form* were used to measure the impact of the materials used. Statistically significant positive



differences were noted in the achievement and attendance of students in the experimental group, which utilized the black studies materials. Students' self-concept, as measured by *The How I Feel About Myself Inventory*, was not significantly different for the experimental and control groups, however. [31]

Mildred B. Roberts (1971) tested a success-oriented science program (DISCUS) on the attendance and school activity participation of junior high school underachievers. Experimental groups were exposed to the DISCUS program, while teachers instructing the control groups could use any materials they wished in their classes. Students were assigned randomly to both groups. From the data collected, students in the DISCUS program showed significant gains in attendance when compared with the control group. Half of the experimental students became involved in school activities as compared to a third of the control group. [53]

#### EFFECTS OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT ON ATTENDANCE

An absenteeism study by Christopher Grala and Clark McCauley (1976) was conducted in an inner-city community referral center in Philadelphia, which was frequented by truants. Thirty-two males, all black or Puerto Rican, between the ages of 13 and 17 who had attended school for less than two weeks a month, were unknowing subjects of the experiment. Four groups of eight were constructed: in two groups, threat appeal (i.e., warnings of the negative consequences of non-attendance) was used to induce attendance with or without supportive instruction (i.e., offers of help in getting back to school, extra help, tutoring); in the other two groups, optimistic appeal (i.e., expalantions of the benefits of attendance) was used in conjunction with or without

supportive instruction. Someone who knew and talked with the boys and who also was brought up in the ghetto acted as the experimenter. The results indicate that the subjects verbally agreed to return to school when threat appeal was used, yet to change their attendance patterns, they needed supportive instruction with either optimistic or threat appeal. [30]

Ronald R. Morgan (1975) used material, peer, and teacher reinforcements as stimuli for better attendance with 89 lower-income Mexican-Americans with excessive school absences enrolled in two Tempe (Arizona) elementary schools. Three treatment groups were formed: (1) material plus peer social reinforcement, (2) material reinforcement only, and (3) teacher social reinforcement. Tokens which could be redeemed for candy and toys served as the material reinforcement in the experiment. One control group, whose behavior was not reinforced for attendance, also was included in each school. These four groups were stratified randomly by grade level--K-5, Non-Graded, and Special Education. Daily attendance charts were used for record-keeping. When the number of days absent before the conditioning trials (40 school days) was compared with the number of days absent during the conditioning trials (40 school days) and the extinction trials (20 school days), all three treatment groups had reduced their absentee rate significantly more than the control group. [46]

B. David Brooks (1974) has found that contracting with truants for rewards has been one way to effect better attendance. [9; 10] In one study [10], 40 chronic nonattending senior high school students (truant nine or more days in the first eight weeks of school) were placed randomly into experimental and control groups. In a "baseline" period of



eight weeks with 37 mandatory days of attendance, attendance data were collected on subjects in both groups. Telephone calls to parents, suspensions, and other normal attendance policies were carried out. In the "intervention" period, which had the same time span and mandatory days of attendance as the "baseline" period but with three school holidays, the same attendance procedures remained in effect for the control group. However, a contract and reward scheme for good attendance was explained to students in the experimental group. Their attendance at school would be

rewarded with drawings for cash prizes ranging from \$1.00 to \$10.00 in the first three weeks, and with records, movie tickets, and gift certificates in weeks 4-6. By the eighth week no prizes would be given, even though students would have to continue their good attendance patterns. Completed attendance cards would be redeemed for one ticket to the drawing. Bonus tickets could be received for positive comments from teachers and for consecutive days of attendance. All the students in the experimental group signed the following contract:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Problem:** During the first eight weeks of school I have had \_\_\_\_\_ days of truancy. I agree that this is excessive and will follow the procedure below in order that I might reduce the number of days truant.

**Provisions:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the following:

1. I will attend school every day. If I miss school it will be for an excused illness or doctor's appointment and I agree to bring a note from home.
2. At the end of each school day I will record my attendance on a chart in the counselor's office.
3. Each morning I will pick a green attendance card in the counselor's office, complete the card, have it initialed by each teacher for each class I attend, and exchange the card with my counselor according to the provisions of the reward schedule posted in the counselor's office.
4. I agree to attend all scheduled group meetings. I understand that this is a binding contract and I agree to abide by all the provisions herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

**Counselor's Statement and Agreement:**

I understand that this is a binding contract between \_\_\_\_\_ and myself and I agree to the provisions herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor's Signature [10:207]

At the end of the period tested, truancy was reduced in 19 out of 20 cases in the experimental group and in only four out of 20 cases in the control group. With the teacher writing positive comments about the student, more positive teacher-student relations became evident. Total cost of the project amounted to \$35.00, with estimated savings to the school district of several thousand dollars because of increased attendance. The author urges

school officials [to] save time and effort by dealing with the individual truant behavior and not attempting to alter environmental contingencies that may be beyond the control of the school, such as home problems and societal conditions. [10:211]

On the elementary level, Margaret Dockery (1970) tried to raise attendance in a lower-income school in St. Louis by sponsoring two May Frolics for grades K-3 and a Sock Hop for grades 4-8. The price of admission consisted of six continuous weeks of perfect attendance. By the end of the contest period, one third of the school, over 400 pupils, had not missed a single day. Many other pupils missed only one half or one day--all attributed to illness. [88]

#### EFFECTS OF PARENT-SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT ON ATTENDANCE

Richard Fiodaliso and his associates (1977) studied the effects of feedback in reducing absenteeism among junior high school students involved in a research project aimed at helping students with learning and/or behavior problems--Preparation through Responsive Educational Programs (PREP). Three groups of eighth graders who were enrolled in a rural, low-income middle school near a major metropolitan city participated in the study. Each group was composed of 18 boys and 14 girls.

One group participated in the PREP academic curriculum, which offered individualized classes in reading, math, and English for three classes a day, in addition to four traditional courses. Students enrolled in the social skills component of PREP, where in addition to their six regularly-scheduled classes they received intensive social skills training for one period a day, comprised the second group. The third group involved in the study, the no-treatment control subjects, did not participate in any special PREP activity. [26:189]

Absentee data were kept on all three groups. During the first quarter of the 1974-75 school year, normal school policy on absenteeism was followed: the school nurse phoned parents after a student's third consecutive absence and the student failed the class after five unexcused or 15 excused absences in a single marking period. During the second quarter of that year, however, parents immediately were informed of their child's absences and received positive telephone calls and letters when their child's attendance record was good. [26:189]

Results indicate that attendance for both the academic and social groups showed significant improvement in relation to the control group, from comparisons between the baseline-year and program-year attendance records. But the authors believe that these findings are a result of both the effects of PREP and the special procedures implemented in the attendance program. [26:191]

Ronald G. Bittle (1977) experimented with a telephone answering system to inform parents of their children's absences. In an earlier study [7], Bittle found that, when such a system was used to disseminate information on pupils' progress in their school work, parents readily used the system. The



school's costs and preparation time were minimal. To determine the system's effects on reducing student absenteeism, 37 chronically absent students at Anna Jonesboro Community High School in Southern Illinois were each given a coded number. Parents were sent a letter explaining that they could check their sons' or daughters' absences, given as the coded number, each day during the last six weeks of school by calling a special telephone number. [8:50]

The special number was called 247 times during this period, with 19 of the 37 subjects showing gains in their attendance rates. Bittle points out that other variables could have influenced these results since the experiment was not controlled. However, he believes that the recording device did help students decrease their absences because parents used the system; the message was simple, direct, and nonentertaining; attendance increased even though the experiment was held at the end of the school year, normally a time of poorer attendance; and the calls were evenly distributed during the test period. [8:50]

Rodney E. Copeland and his associates (1972) measured the effects of a principal praising parents for their children's attendance in school. Nine Kansas City (Kansas) elementary students who were enrolled in a remedial summer school program served as the population of the study. Attendance was not mandatory. The "praised" group consisted of five pupils who had skipped the first four days of class. When the principal of the school called these pupils' parents, attendance rose. The principal continued to call these parents and praise them for their children's attendance after every 2-3 classes

thereafter, for approximately 15 classes. No calls were made, however, between days 19 and 30. The "call-only" group was chosen after the sixth day of school and was made up of three pupils who had not attended class even once and one who had come only on the first day. Parents were called twice, on days 6 and 16, but were given no praise. The results indicate that the principal's positive calls to the parents of the "praised" group significantly affected attendance throughout the experiment. Attendance for pupils in the "call-only" group did increase immediately after the principal's calls but these gains tended to diminish. From these data the authors conclude that "some student behaviors (in this case, attendance) might more easily be controlled by reinforcing parents than by directly reinforcing the pupils." [16:58]

Frank C. Parker's and James F. McCoy's research (1977) extended the Copeland analysis by adding a further condition. In this case, the principal tried to lessen the absentee rate of five first-grade and three second-grade chronic nonattenders by: (1) praising the children directly in the classroom for good attendance, (2) calling pupils' parents to praise them for their child's good attendance (positive reinforcement), or (3) calling parents to show disapproval of their child's absences and urge them to see that he or she come to school (negative reinforcement). Pupils directly praised for good attendance increased, but did not maintain, their attendance, while both positive and negative calls to parents produced prolonged increases in attendance and parent-initiated contacts with the school. [50]



## What Can Be Done?

What makes a successful attendance policy or program? The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) studied sample attendance policies and concluded that the following features were common to attendance policies and programs that worked:

- The policies are strong. When little or nothing is done about attendance the problem gets worse. Schools making headway on attendance are schools which expend considerable thought and effort to solving the problem.
- Participation in the formulation of attendance policy is broadly based. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents frequently are involved in policy making.
- Policies clearly specify in writing attendance expectations and delineate the outcomes of good and poor attendance.
- Policies are well publicized. Each parent and student repeatedly has been informed of attendance requirements.
- Policies are consistently enforced. At each level of enforcement--teacher, counselor, dean, principal--compliance with the policy is expected.
- Immediate follow-up on absences is made by a letter, a telephone call to the home, or some other means. [61:7]

In a booklet outlining strategies for improving Monday-Friday attendance patterns, the Los Angeles City Schools emphasizes the need to involve everyone in working for better attendance:

- All students need to have an opportunity to participate in group sessions to communicate their interests, problems, needs, and feelings, and to witness the implementation of some of their wishes.
- Teachers (and other school personnel) need to have an opportunity to participate in group sessions with skilled mental health consultants who are knowledgeable about schools, youth, and adults to express their feelings, frustrations, and problems; to find solutions to these problems; and to develop changes in attitudes.
- Parents need to have an opportunity to participate in group sessions with skilled leaders to understand more fully the educational process and their children, to help develop goals, and to cooperate in keeping their children involved in school.
- Agency personnel need to have an opportunity to participate in group sessions to assure greater understanding and cooperation in their

work with families and students.

[84:10]

John Hoback, principal of Boulder (Colorado) High School, believes the school must take its share of the blame in driving away certain students from its doors. The "authoritarian and paternalistic" philosophy of the traditional school raises fundamental problems:

- Achievement is measured primarily in terms of time spent in class (or time endured as the case may be). Instead of establishing achievement criteria in terms of behavioral outcomes, anecdotal descriptions of achievements, or comprehensive standardized measurements, we almost universally use such vague guesstimates as "years in school," or "credit hours," Carnegie units, or "high school diploma." Along with the subjectively granted letter grade, time is the primary language used to measure learning.
- We encourage dependency and immaturity in the student. He feels no sense of commitment or responsibility and is eager to get away with whatever he can.
- We create a climate of adversary game-playing between students and administration.
- We all too often penalize the honest student or the student with honest parents, while the liars and cheats beat the system.
- An inordinate amount of staff time (clerical, administrative, and counseling) is spent in the "busy-work" of hassling all students instead of focusing major efforts on helping the student who has problems.

[99:21-22]

Any remedies to school attendance, Hoback says, should make room for students to assume greater responsibility, treat truancy as a symptom of a larger problem, make use of non-classroom educational opportunities, and allow students to become actively involved in the learning process. Emphasizing that teachers remain the key to a successful attendance policy, Hoback argues that

even a well-organized program can be burdened with truancy problems if a vital component is missing--the student must be given a feeling of being needed and wanted. If he feels that his presence doesn't really matter to anyone but himself, then he probably won't care sometimes whether he attends even a well-presented session or not. [99:26]

In *Rainy Days and Mondays*, Karweit lists the suggestions below for attendance improvement both in the short- and the long-run. She wonders if stop-gap measures used in the short term would last after the newness disappears, since "quite simply what is desired is to make schools an interesting and rewarding enough place that students will want to attend." [40:73] Any workable long-run changes would necessitate a fundamental questioning of the ways schools are administered, something that the author believes is not likely to happen.

#### Short-Term Suggestions:

1. Schedule relevant activities on Mondays and Friday, the worst days of absenteeism. Special events could be planned; class scheduling could be varied (e.g., begin school later with shortened lunch or homeroom periods); school annuals, rings, bus tickets could be distributed on those days.
2. Allow special leaves of absence and easy re-entry to school for student mothers who are excessively absent



due to child care and parenting duties.

More flexible schedules and credit for child care classes are other ways to stimulate their attendance.

3. Have the home room teacher display more interest in absences. The extent to which students stay out of school because they think no one

notifies when they come back is not known. But, if the home room teacher could manage to show concern over the absence and interest in return to school, it might prove useful.

4. Make students aware that future employers call the school and obtain attendance data. Then poor attendance may mean they won't be able to be hired. Probably the best way to do this is by some sort of game playing or simulation so that the point is brought home actively.

5. Have former students come to counsel small groups of chronically absent or problem attenders. This might prove to be effective where teachers, etc., are not.

6. Sponsor attendance contests by home room, giving specific, tangible rewards. Perhaps money is the only reward that would be attractive enough. Other possibilities include special seating in an important assembly, or letting the best home room sing at a special assembly.

7. Establish a "buddy" system or equivalent of a group of attenders where each is responsible for the others' attendance and for seeing that make-up work is given to students who missed class.

8. At the beginning of the school year have each home room teacher review the previous year's attendance record

with each student. Many students do not realize how many weeks of school they have missed.

9. Have the home room teacher or aide call the home of the student who is absent to discuss the problem. Set aside time in each teacher's daily schedule to make these phone calls.  
[40:70-73]

#### Long-Range Suggestions:

1. Arrange students' schedules so that work and school can harmoniously exist.
2. Allow students to take a semester's leave of absence without officially dropping out of school.
3. Allow students to pass a course on the basis of meeting agreed upon requirements or objectives without penalizing them grade-wise for their absence.
4. Allow students to attend the school they want to. Schools should advertise openly and accurately what their offerings are. Prospective students should have the opportunity to find out specific facts about the school, such as what its graduates do after graduation, how many go to college, and so on.
5. Attempt to devise a fairer, more objective way to grade students which accounts for initial ability and effort expended. Such a grading scheme could be used as a substitute for or in conjunction with current grading practices. Students who expend very little effort and those who work very hard for their grade should be rewarded differently.
6. Implement on a larger scale methods that look promising in promoting good attendance. For example, the



organization of the classroom into teams competing in a learning game has in preliminary work produced significant changes in attendance behavior (Allen, et. al., 1973). [40:75]

The specific approaches that school systems have used in attempting to improve attendance can be divided into five major categories:

- (1) Rewards for good attendance
  - exam exemption
  - inter- or intra-school competition for prizes, etc.
- (2) Punishments for excessive absenteeism
  - withholding of course credit
  - lowering of grades
  - suspension, expulsion, etc.
- (3) Home-school contacts
  - by mail or telephone, resulting in increased parental awareness leading to active involvement in conferences, etc.
- (4) Community-school contacts
  - law enforcement involvement
  - participation in community services, etc.
- (5) Alternative programs for poor attenders

Alma (Arkansas) High School experienced a 96.4 percent attendance rate for the first semester of school year 1975-76 after the introduction of its "positive action attendance policy." Students with perfect semester attendance records can exempt their semester tests--314 out of 846 students did so in the fall of 1975.

Overall attendance was up 50 percent after Napa (California) High School instituted a policy allowing for up to 12 days absence per semester for each student. It was emphasized that these days were to be used for legitimate absences, e.g., illness and necessary doctor's appointments, though the school makes no check into the reasons behind the absence. More than 12 absences in any course may result in the student failing that course. Parents are contacted after the fourth, eighth, and twelfth absences; the student can petition

an attendance review board before action is taken leading to the denial of course credit.

The Alexandria (Virginia) Public Schools reduced its absentee rate substantially by involving local law enforcement. Police officers locate youths frequenting shopping centers, city streets, and the like during school hours and immediately take them to their schools. Although serious truancy cases have been resolved thus far through home-school conferences, charges against both the parent and the student may be filed after police have picked up a student for the third time.

It should be noted, though, that encouraging attendance by withholding course credit or lowering grades may have legal implications in certain states. Even though the courts generally have not dealt with administrative matters handled by the school (e.g., attendance), the NASSP notes the growing judicial concern over the question of students' rights. The New Jersey Commissioner of Education, empowered with quasi-judicial duties, has reviewed at least three cases on this issue:

- *Minorics v. Board of Education of Phillipsburg* (March 1972)--The Commissioner ruled that the school's policy of grade reduction used to reduce truancy was excessive, especially when it also was used with in-school suspensions for unexcused absences.
- *Gertner v. Board of Education of Elmwood Park* (December 1974)--Here the Commissioner supported the school's denial of a student's graduation because of excessive absenteeism, even though the student had been suspended earlier for cutting classes.

- *Wheatley v. Board of Education of Burlington* (September 1974)--Appealing their school district's policy which disallowed course credit after 30 days of absences, nine students who did not receive their diplomas petitioned the Commissioner. The Commissioner set aside this policy, not because it was too strict, but because it was too lenient. He also addressed the proposition of withholding course credit or reducing students' grades for chronic absenteeism. The crucial issue, the Commissioner decided, rests on whether or not the school's policy is based on a professional judgment that excessive absences negatively affect the student's performance and level of competency in the course.

[61:2-3; 104]

In a related case (*Dorsey v. Bale*, March 1975), the Court of Appeals of Kentucky upheld a circuit court ruling that the school board could not reduce a student's grade for unexcused absences given as a further punishment for conduct which led to suspension from school. The courts declined to rule on the motions of the other students involved in this, a class action suit. [89]

The Illinois Court of Appeals, in *Knight v. Board of Education of Tri-Point Community Unit School District* (1976), ruled that due process and equal protection were not denied a student whose grades were lowered one letter grade for one fourth of the year (according to school policy) for two days truancy. The punishment, the court found, was not unreasonable for the offense. [103]

The reasoning behind the school district's attendance policy appears to be the key in the New Jersey cases on which the NASSP reported. When a student cannot master course content because of excessive absenteeism, denial of credit or reduction of grades appears reasonable. This measure appears unreasonable when punishment is levied primarily as a punitive action. Thus, if a student earns a B on his or her final exam, it would be unfair to deny that student credit for the course because of excessive absenteeism, in the opinion of the New Jersey Commissioner. [104]

In many jurisdictions, of course, no opportunity for quasi-judicial review of this question would be available, and the court might refuse to consider it. But the rationale of the New Jersey Commissioner of Education may offer some valuable guidance in establishing disciplinary policy to deal with excessive absence and truancy. [104]



## Policies and Programs to Improve Attendance

The following sample programs were collected from mail and telephone requests, journal articles, and school board policies. They have been included to show the wide variety of ways schools have tackled the problem of student absenteeism. Inclusion in this report does not imply endorsement by ERS or its sponsoring organizations.

### E X 1

ALMA HIGH SCHOOL (Alma, Arkansas)

#### A POSITIVE ACTION ATTENDANCE POLICY

Alma High School is a school of 846 students in grades seven through twelve in which many of the students are transported. Although attendance had never been bad compared to other sections of the United States, the faculty and administrative staff felt a need to initiate steps to improve school attendance.

The policy which was adopted has caused a significant change in the attitude of parents and students toward school attendance and has brought about a resulting increase in attendance. The attendance rate for the first semester of the 1975-76 school year was 96.4%. This represents a net gain of 2.3% based upon the same period of the previous year, which is a significant increase.

Student absences are classified as: (1) parent permission or (2) truant. Students are allowed to make up work missed in case of absence for the following reasons:

1. Death in the family
2. Medical or dental appointment
3. Illness of the student
4. Official school trips
5. Other reasons if approval is obtained in advance.

After a student has been absent a total of ten days per semester, makeup work will not be allowed unless the student has a note from a doctor.

Students who maintain perfect attendance for the semester will not be required to take semester tests. They will attend school on test days but will be exempt from tests.

The school administration feels that the positive approach taken in the preceding paragraph is the reason for the increase in attendance. A total of 314 students out of 846 maintained perfect attendance records for the first semester. Students are very happy with the policy and are making every effort to achieve a perfect attendance record. For exemption purposes the perfect attendance is absolute - no excuses are accepted.

The increase of 2.3% for the student body of 846 represents an increase in attendance of 19.4 students per day. For the semester of 89 days this is an increase of 1726.6 days of school attendance per semester.

## ALMA HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

Although some had reservations about this policy when it was adopted, the school community is very happy with the policy after one semester of use. It results in better attendance which benefits students, teachers, and administration of the school.

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## NAPA HIGH SCHOOL (Napa, California)

ATTENDANCE POLICYOUR NEEDS

As a result of discussion at a faculty meeting held in the fall, whereby the attendance practices of students were an agenda item, a faculty/administration study committee was formed. The faculty was unanimous for the committee to develop and recommend a policy in having attendance requirements as part of the earning of course credit [and to implement it as] a school wide policy and hopefully a district policy as well. Presently, this relationship is an assumption in most cases. A recently appointed Faculty Curriculum Review Committee is reviewing our curriculum and making recommendations for providing opportunities to further meet the needs of some students who are having difficulties in certain segments of their school program.

The Attendance Policy Study Committee studied the attendance survey completed by teachers, heard from teachers, counselors, deans, students, etc., on some of the present problems as well as analyzed some of the newer successful practices used in other districts in California and other states.

PROPOSED PLAN

Napa High School Administration and faculty, after an analysis by the Attendance Policy Study Committee, proposed a policy which would place more of the responsibility for attendance on the student by making the earning of credit directly contingent on his regular attendance, assuming satisfactory completion of class work.

EXISTING PROBLEM

Although the ADA total loss is reasonably low at Napa High School as compared to other schools, a number of students have records of excessive all day as well as period absences and [this] has increased steadily over the past several years, causing such problems as:

1. Lack of self-discipline.
2. Lowering teacher efficiency by necessitating much repetition of explanation of subject matter for returning absentees.
3. Lessening of the effectiveness of the examination as a learning instrument, since results often can't be discussed until absentees have made up the test.
4. Lowering student morale, since many students receive the same number of credits for far less time in class.
5. Increasing teacher frustration, since many types of classroom work, such as lectures, films, panels and class discussions, cannot be made up.
6. Lowering of educational standards, as work tends to be geared to the rate of absenteeism.
7. Wasting of valuable class time with traditional attendance practices which are not effective.
8. [Neglect of] student responsibility to contribute to the class.
9. Financial support of the educational program.
10. [Need to] educate students for the future to be dependable responsible citizens.
11. Student falsification of absence excuse to cover absences thereby contributing to the teaching of dishonesty.



## NAPA HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

BASIC PREMISES

The Attendance Policy is based on the following premises:

1. Each class period contains instructional material or activities that are of significant importance to the student.
2. A student should evidence productive attendance a majority of the semester in order to qualify for 5 semester periods.

SUPPORT

This policy has been reviewed with the Executive Board of PTSA, Executive Council of the ASB as well as the Principal Advisory Committee which support this concept. In presenting the proposal to Secondary Principals last spring, it was unanimously endorsed and recommended to the Superintendent that it be implemented as a pilot program for this school year evaluation. Parents and students have been informed and to date we have witnessed an improvement of overall attendance compared to last year at the same time.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

1. This policy designates twelve (12) days absence per semester as maximum allowed for normal circumstances of regular school attendance. The twelve (12) days of absence are to accommodate:
  - a. Personal illness
  - b. Professional appointments that could not be scheduled outside the regular school day
  - c. Serious personal or family problems

Thirteen or more absences during a semester can jeopardize a student's enrollment status in that class.

2. After the fourth (4), eighth (8), and twelfth (12) absences from any class period, the teacher of that class will complete a form indicating the dates of student absences. This form will be mailed home by the attendance office and copies issued to appropriate staff members.<sup>1/</sup> The student shall be counseled by the teacher at the fourth (4) absence. The teacher and counselor/administrator shall counsel the student following the eighth (8) and twelfth (12) absences. A personal<sup>2/</sup> school contact will be made with the parent immediately following the 8th day of absence. The parent will be encouraged to initiate a conference with the teacher to clarify absenteeism and any questions which may be raised. Chronic illness and other extenuating circumstances will be considered in extending the limit of allowed absences.
3. With the accumulation of thirteen (13) absences during the semester for any class period, the student risks forfeiture of course credit in that class and can be dropped from class enrollment. Parents will be notified.
4. A review by the Napa High School Attendance Review Board (NHSARB) consisting of representation from administration, counseling and faculty may be requested by the student, teacher, parent or counselor to examine the specific conditions relating to the individual case any time prior to dropping from class. The NHSARB may extend the absence limit, continue the student's enrollment in the class(es) on a probationary basis, or take such action as is indicated. The parent will be promptly informed in writing of the results of such hearing.

<sup>1/</sup> Copies to counselor, attendance office, teacher.

<sup>2/</sup> Teacher contacts parent by phone; if not successful, refer to counselor for follow-up. This contact at end of 8th day is most important. It does assure the home is aware and also allows time to make any adjustments to overcome difficulties. It provides the resources of the school working with the home cooperatively, to offer assistance to the student.

## NAPA HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

5. School-sponsored or sanctioned activities for which the student has been properly pre-excused are exempted from and will not pertain to this policy.
6. Disciplinary suspension days will be included in the total days absent.
7. Tardiness is defined as any unexcused appearance of a student beyond the scheduled time that a class begins. Three (3) incidents of unexcused tardies to a class will be considered as equal to one (1) absence. Tardiness of 20 minutes or more to a class may, at the discretion of the teacher, be considered an absence. The teacher shall notify the student when such incidents are recorded as absences.
8. Students must maintain a minimum enrollment in four courses to continue as a regular student; one study hall is permitted. Student's enrollment shall be dropped when the minimum of four classes is not maintained.
9. It is extremely important that students realize that the twelve (12) days of absences built into the attendance policy are not to be considered as authorized days for absences but for illness and emergencies.
10. A School Attendance Advisory Committee consisting of administration, faculty, and students will periodically evaluate this policy in an effort to maintain guidelines that reflect the school's educational philosophy and contribute to the welfare of the students.

## NAPA VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Napa High School  
2475 Jefferson Street  
Napa, California 94558

Principal

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this letter is to provide parents and students with timely information about attendance records in the following class. Your child \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ was absent from his/her \_\_\_\_\_ period (subject) \_\_\_\_\_ class on the following days \_\_\_\_\_

We believe that maximum educational achievement occurs for students through regular attendance in classes, while excessive absence results in below average achievement and possibly even failure.

After accumulating thirteen absences from any one class, the student will not receive credit for that course, and may be dropped from that course.

PLEASE REFER TO COMPLETE ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR FURTHER DETAILS AND CLARIFICATION.

Please contact your child's counselor regarding absences and academic progress. Appointments can be arranged by calling the Counseling office, tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

Very truly yours,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher, Napa High School

PARENT CONTACTED BY: TEACHER ☐  
COUNSELOR ☐  
OTHER ☐

COMMENTS:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## COPIES:

white - parents  
canary - counselor  
pink - office  
goldenrod - returned to teacher

THIS IS THE \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST NOTICE  
(4 absences)SECOND NOTICE  
(8 absences)Conference with  
Counselor is  
recommended.THIRD NOTICE  
(12 absences)FOURTH NOTICE  
(13 absences)



## NAPA HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

NAPA VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
NAPA HIGH SCHOOL  
January 30, 1976

RESULTS OF NEW ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Attendance has improved approximately 50% overall as compared with last year. Non-ill absences have been reduced more than 40%. (Less than 4.5% on the average as compared with 8-12% for the same period last year.)
2. Students are in classes more frequently resulting in less repetition by the teacher to help absent students make up work missed. This results in increased instructional time.
3. Teachers are more aware of keeping accurate attendance records and many have made telephone contacts with parents. These calls have had positive results in most cases because parents are favorably impressed with a teacher's concern for their child's welfare. Teachers generally have been willing to take on the extra workload required by the policy because they realize the importance and benefit of good attendance.
4. Many parents have expressed favorable comments concerning the attendance policy. Several have remarked that they are happy to see the school doing something to improve attendance. A few have been critical of the policy. Most of these are those who have covered for their children's excessive absences in the past and have always been critical.
5. Truancies have been reduced considerably with parents becoming aware of class cuts much faster. Many have called us to report their children truant after receiving the letter for four absences in a class or classes.
6. The number of pupils transferred to Continuation Education is less than last year, indicating better holding power with the new policy. (1974 - 4.6%) (1975 - 4%) Beginning of school to 12/15.
7. Workload for Attendance Office personnel has increased with the mailing of letters daily. This extra work has been partially offset, however, because fewer absence clearances are required. The overall impact has been an improvement in attendance accounting.
8. Counselor contacts with students having attendance problems and their parents have increased considerably. This has resulted because of the required telephone call to parents following the eighth absence from a class. Because of these contacts, counselors have become aware of other problems of their counselees.
9. A number of parent conferences and meetings of the Attendance Review Board have been held. Allowable time for absence as a result of bona fide reasons has been extended for 58 students. This board consists of Assistant Principal/Guidance, a counselor, student or parents and teachers who desire to attend.
10. Increased revenue to the district has also resulted. This projected increase is estimated to be approximately \$6,420 for the Fall semester. [95:3-7]

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THE NORWICH FREE ACADEMY (Norwich, Connecticut)

ATTENDANCE POLICYPHILOSOPHY

At the Academy, the learning experiences that take place in the classroom environment are considered to be a meaningful and essential part of its educational system. Absences tend to disrupt the continuity of the instructional process and the time loss from class is irretrievable,

## THE NORWICH FREE ACADEMY (Continued)

particularly in terms of opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas between students, and students and teachers. Therefore, classroom attendance is considered to be an integral part of the student's course of study.

GRADES AND COURSE CREDIT

Grades earned in any course shall reflect the student's daily attendance as well as the fulfillment of other academic requirements as may be established by the teacher. A penalty shall be assessed by the teacher for any unexcused absence in accordance with policy established by the school.

To earn credit in any course, a student is obligated to:

1. fulfill the course requirements as may be established by the teacher, and
2. not exceed the allowable limit of absences as established by the school's attendance policy.

PENALTY FOR ABSENTEEISM/TARDINESS

All limits and penalties stated in the following regulations are for courses that meet four class periods weekly. Limits and penalties for classes meeting less than four periods weekly will be pro-rated accordingly.

... for SUBJECT CLASS ABSENCES

1. For every two (2) unexcused class absences during a grading period, the teacher shall lower the grade for that grading period one grade level (5 to a 4, 4 to a 3, etc.).
2. There shall be no penalty for an excused class absence; however, it is an absence that is counted toward the allowable limits established for the grading period/semester/school year.
3. Any student who totals ten or more class absences during any one grading period shall receive a grade of 1 for that grading period.

Note: A student may appeal to his housemaster for a waiver if it can be demonstrated that the absences were due to factors beyond the student's control, such as, absences due to verifiable medical reasons, death in the family, or a school sponsored activity. The housemaster may then allow the student to exceed the absence limits if it is evident that the work missed will be made up.

4. Any student who accumulates fifteen or more absences in a course during a semester shall receive a final grade of 1 for that semester. A final grade of 1 will be recorded for an accumulation of twenty-five or more absences in a course during a school year.

(The same appeal procedure noted in 3 above shall apply.)

... for STUDY CLASS ABSENCES

An unexcused absence from a study class will be processed as follows:

FIRST absence - the student's home will be notified.

SECOND absence - will require conversational contact with the parent/s.

THIRD absence - the student may be suspended.



## THE NORWICH FREE ACADEMY (Continued)

... for DETENTION ABSENCES

Whenever a student fails to report to an assigned afterschool detention, and in the opinion of the teacher the student's excuse is unacceptable, the teacher shall treat the absence the same as an unexcused class absence. If the detention was assigned by the student's subject class teacher, the policy for subject class absences shall apply; if assigned by a study class teacher, the policy for study class absences shall apply.

... for TARDINESS TO CLASS

Teachers shall consider three (3) unexcused tardinesses to class during a grading period, the equivalent of one unexcused absence. The appropriate subject class or study class policy shall apply.

... for TARDINESS TO SCHOOL

The first unexcused tardiness to school shall warrant a warning. Unexcused tardiness thereafter shall warrant the assigning of after school detention.

EXCUSING AN ABSENCE

If the student has a legitimate reason for an absence and wishes to have the absence considered as an excused absence, the student must obtain a REASON FOR ABSENCE form upon return to school, have the parent complete the form and return it within the specified time.

It is the student's responsibility to account for any attendance matter on his own time (class or study time cannot be used). Knowing and abiding by the regulations and procedures governing attendance is a student responsibility.

## SAMPLE LETTER MAILED TO PARENTS AFTER EACH STUDENT'S ABSENCE

F  
R The Norwich Free Academy  
O 108 Crescent Street  
M Norwich, Connecticut 06360

RE: (Student's name) \*ABSENT\* 01/13, 01/16

Dear Parent/s.

Please note that the student referred to above has been recorded absent on the date/s indicated. Included are all absences, excused and unexcused, for the week.

According to school policy, classroom attendance is an integral part of the student's course of study.... An academic penalty is assessed for all unexcused absences and there are established limits on the number of absences allowable. Please refer to your previously mailed copy of the attendance policy for more details. If you have any questions please feel free to call (tel. no.).

Thank you for your cooperation.

The Norwich Free Academy. 01/16/76

Student Number--  
Homeroom--

T  
O

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Norwich, CT 06360

# EX 4

## EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL (Evanston, Illinois)

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### Problem

Excessive absences from class.

#### Policy

State law makes the school responsible for students; their whereabouts must be known at all times during the school day. Students except during passing periods or while carrying a hall pass are expected to be in class or in one of eight areas throughout the school: Quiet study rooms, Conversational study areas, Resource Center, Central Reference Center, Student lounges, Open labs, Faculty approved meeting rooms and Cafeterias during lunch mods.

#### Disciplinary Action

The resources of classroom teachers, guidance personnel, and school administrators shall be employed constructively to solve with individual students their problems of excessive absence. There shall be adequate provisions for make-up work. Administrative procedures to implement this policy shall be written and shall be published annually to students, staff and parents.

#### Administrative Procedures

Evanston Township High School expects all students to attend all classes and other scheduled activities.

1. When a student is absent from school with the knowledge and approval of the parents, a parent phones the school attendance office. Calls received before 3:15 p.m. will be reflected on the next day's excused absence list.
2. With the aid of data processing, each teacher receives, each morning, information which shows whether absences from the previous day are excused or unexcused.
3. The teacher phones the parents of each student who has his/her first\* unexcused absence. This parent-teacher phone contact concerns the student's class work as well as attendance.
4. If a student has a second unexcused absence from the same class, the teacher again\* contacts the parent.
5. At the third unexcused absence, the teacher notifies the school office. At this point, the parents are notified by phone that a student conference is scheduled by the assistant principal or dean with any or all of the following: the parent, the teacher, and the counselor. If a phone contact is not possible, the parent is notified by certified mail or by the outreach worker. At this conference a determination is made of any further action. The alternatives include the following:

- The student may be permitted to stay in the course under agreed upon conditions.
- The student may choose to withdraw from the course with loss of credit.
- The student may drop the course and add another course if within the time limits.
- The student may be changed to a different section or level within the department.
- The student may be transferred to Alternative School, if eligible.
- The student may be transferred to Evening School, if eligible.
- The student may be assigned to special help, such as a skills lab.

If the parent does not attend the conference, a letter indicating the results of that conference is mailed to the parents by certified mail.

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\* Teachers of Physical Education are required to make only one home contact.



## EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

6. If a student remains in the same class after this conference, the responsibility of the school for contacting parents personally and for providing make-up work for any further unexcused absences in this course ceases.
7. In all courses, it is recognized that regular class attendance is necessary for success. Thus, if a teacher or counselor feels that a student's absences from class, excused or unexcused, are adversely affecting the student's work, that teacher or counselor should contact the parent.
8. At the beginning of the year or semester, the expectations of each teacher for each class are written and distributed to the students. These expectations include the teacher's policy toward make-up tests, assignments, grades and tardiness. For example, while a teacher may not lower a grade strictly on the basis of the number of absences, the written expectations might state that tests missed during an unexcused absence could not be made up.
9. Students with fewer than three absences of any kind may have the option of not taking the semester exam in that course. Departments which do not have semester exams are urged to consider similar incentives. Absences due to school-sponsored activities and suspension are not counted toward this incentive plan or toward any part of this policy. Make-up work is allowed in both cases.
10. The Cook County Truant Officer may be notified at the discretion of the dean or assistant principal.
11. All students must carry at least three credit-bearing courses per semester. The Evening School (or an alternative program) is available to those students who have fewer than three courses.
12. In order to safeguard against illegitimate phone calls to the attendance office, the attendance officer contacts the home periodically. Any student who falsifies an excuse is subject to suspension.
13. All of the above policy pertains to one semester.
14. Any student may appeal any decision to the administration. [82]

Effective 1/31/77

Student response to this policy, which replaced one allowing 13 absences before course credit was lost, appeared in the school newspaper, *The Evanstonian*:

In abandoning the present 13-absence attendance policy at the end of next week, the Board of Education has jumped all the way from its liberal attitude of the past three semesters to a highly regulated system that appears to be designed for fifth graders. We wait with adolescent cynicism for the disintegration of the new policy, which ought to make a good skit for YAMO '77.

Imagine the scene that is going to occur every day outside school offices beginning next month. The student finally reaches the front of the long line of his peers who are cleverly posed just out of sight of the office. He puts his 20 cents into the public telephone and assumes the deepest, most convincing voice he can: "Yes, Jim won't be coming in again today," he explains to the secretary sitting not ten feet from him, "his cold has gotten worse."

As she busily records his name and ID, a parent trying to call the school from home to report a genuine absence frustratedly hangs up in disgust at yet another busy signal. Meanwhile, teachers rush to the few school phones available to them to try to reach parents of their day's truants so that they won't have to make evening calls that skyrocket their home phone bills. By this time the ETHS switchboard is filled to capacity

## EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

and rapidly reaching the point of becoming a security incident: nervous breakdown.

Yes, this is our new attendance policy, the result of five meetings of a 16-member committee. On the surface the provisions seem feasible. The average teacher should have some success in attempting to contact four or five parents each day or evening. The average gym teacher will find it more difficult, however, to make the 20 or 30 calls that might be required.

In effecting a policy that causes hardships for a majority of students and parents because of the negligence of a few, the board has done away with an attitude toward attendance that seemed reasonable to most of ETHS. The student who has enjoyed the opportunity to use his own discretion about absences--and perhaps to learn from it--now has that chance taken from him with the reinstatement of an arbitrary distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Even worse, the board offers a reward for good attendance, the option of not taking semester exams. That implies the semester exam is simply a punishment for missing class.

Perhaps the frustration of dealing with the new attendance policy will be offset by the entertainment of watching it fall apart. But at this point it doesn't look as though the new policy will benefit anyone, except Illinois Bell. [87]

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WRIGHT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL (Norwalk, California)

PTA WAKE-UP SERVICE

With their parents' permission, tardy students are called anonymously by a member of the PTA and woken up with the message--"Good morning. It's time to wake up and get ready for school." The calls may continue throughout the school year or may be terminated when the student's attendance sufficiently improves. It is not until the last day of school that the student learns the identity of his or her caller. The program has been so successful that several other intermediate schools in the district have begun to use it. [81]

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MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Monroe, Michigan)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Monroe's old attendance policy was as follows:

- After the 1st absence--conference held with the student
- 2nd absence--mandatory parent conference held
- 3rd absence--student temporarily separated from school
- 4th absence--student suspended 4-10 days
- 5th absence--student suspended 11-20 days
- 6th absence--student suspended 11-20 days
- 7th absence--student suspended 11-20 days
- 8th absence--student suspended 11-20 days

The Monroe Public Schools instituted a new plan to put the responsibility for attendance on the student, parents, and teachers:



## MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Continued)

After absences 1-3 from any one class--The teacher calls the student's home or sends a prepared card for each absence. No accusation or determination of guilt is made, merely a statement that "your son missed my 1st hour calculus class today (3/2/75). We thought you'd like to know."

## NOTICE OF ABSENCE

#1

"Can I help you with this?"\*

Your son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ missed my \_\_\_\_\_  
hour \_\_\_\_\_ class today \_/\_/\_. Thought you'd  
like to know.

This is the 1st \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd \_\_\_\_\_ absence this school year.  
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Asst. Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher

\*Please call (tel. no.) \_\_\_\_\_ and ask for the signer of this card.

After absences 4-6 from any one class--The teacher sends card #2 to the student's counselor and makes a personal contact with a parent and the student and mails the card to the home or residence of the parent (and to the student if he or she is 18 or older).

## NOTICE OF ABSENCES

#2

"Can I help you with this?"\*

This is to notify you that your son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_  
has missed \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_  
4th \_\_\_\_\_  
5th \_\_\_\_\_  
6th \_\_\_\_\_ time this school year. If it is the 6th time, your  
next (blue) card will be from your grade level assistant principal.  
Thank you for your attention to this matter. Hope this helps.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Asst. Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor

\*Please call (tel. no.) \_\_\_\_\_ and ask for the signer of this card.

After absences 7-9 from any one class--The teacher sends card #3 to the student's assistant principal, who either makes a home call or has the parent come in for a conference. The assistant principal then mails the card(s) just as the counselor and teacher have already done. A warning that further (7th forward) absences will constitute a potential loss of credit until all work is made up is drafted on the card.

MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Continued)

## NOTICE OF ABSENCES

#3

"Can I help you with this?"\*

In that you have been notified \_\_\_\_\_ times already that  
 \_\_\_\_\_ has missed \_\_\_\_\_ class  
 so far this year, this card is to warn you that more absences  
 will constitute a potential loss of credit which will affect  
 graduation standings. No credit can be given while an "I" is  
 on a teacher's record and unit work must get done.

Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Asst. Principal \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please call (tel. no.) \_\_\_\_\_ and ask for the signer of this card.

After absence 10 and following--The assistant principal refers the child to the attendance officer and/or the special service personnel, i.e., social worker, psychologist, etc.

Attendance is taken by the "test" slips handed in at the end of the hour as the students leave the classroom. We save five minutes per class [for this]. Anyone who doesn't turn in the slip is given an "I." All "I" marks must be eliminated before a 6 weeks', 9 weeks', semester's, yearly mark--and concomitant credit is given. No hassle. No antagonism, just a simple "Do it and get credit. Don't do it and don't get credit."

All unit, concept or whatever [kind] (large unit's time span or term is used)[of] test items are taken directly from the daily questions. Then, the whole marking period's questions are taken from the unit's tests and the semester test is designed from the marking period's tests. This promises a great deal of positive reinforcement to learning what it is we want learned. [107]

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BOULDER HIGH SCHOOL (Boulder, Colorado)

## BOULDER HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

The intent of the attendance policy for Boulder High School students is to provide a structure within which students can gain maximum benefit from the instructional program. Regular attendance in class is necessary if students are to receive adequate guidance through their course work and benefit from the group dynamics generated within any class. The structure provided by the present attendance policy takes into consideration the fact that students at Boulder High have developed to different stages of personal maturity and are thus able to guide their behavior and assume responsibility to a varying degree.

The following guidelines are consistent with the requirements of the Boulder Valley School District and the State of Colorado:

Attendance

*Students are expected to attend all classes for which they are registered every day that classes are in session.* Absence from class may result in the loss of credit when the teacher has formally placed the student on probation for lack of attendance and the student fails to fulfill the requirements of that probation. Teachers may make contractual arrangements with students for attendance patterns different from that described above only when the student demonstrates the maturity to work independently and/or the requirements of the class warrant deviation from the daily attendance requirements. Parents are expected to make prior arrangements for



## BOULDER HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

planned absences, and all work missed must be made up within five days or the time specified by the individual teacher, but in any case no later than two weeks after the return to school. *Work missed for reasons of truancy may not be made up.*

Parent (Guardian's) Responsibility

When a student must be absent from class for illness, religious observance, or other unforeseeable emergency, parents must call Boulder High to inform the attendance office of the absence. This notification must be made on the day of the absence or by noon of the following day. Work missed for legitimate absences as determined by the parents or guardians may be made up. Failure to notify the school of such absences will result in loss of make-up privileges. If parents are unable to call, a written communication must be received by the attendance office prior to the student's return to class.

Enforcement

A pupil who is habitually absent and whose absence is attended by circumstances of intentional disregard of his academic responsibilities will be informed by the teacher and building principal that he is to be in regular attendance except for illness or other acceptable reasons. The pupil and his parents will be informed that continued unexcused absences will result in the loss of credit. Three consecutive unexcused absences will result in suspension from class pending a conference with the building principal and appropriate counselor.

Withdrawal of Absent Students

A student's name may be removed from the school's attendance rolls in accordance with the following provisions: After a student has been absent for five consecutive days without the school having been notified, and reasonable, yet unsuccessful, efforts have been made by the school to satisfactorily resolve the absence with the student and the parents, the student's name will be removed from the attendance roll and for all intents and purposes be considered as having withdrawn from regular attendance. Further, the student and his parents (or guardian) [should] be properly notified by letter of such action with a copy to the Supervisor of Pupil Personnel for proper notification of juvenile authorities where necessary.

## BOULDER HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

## BOULDER HIGH SCHOOL

## Bring to Registration

Dear Parent:

In order to help us work with you toward what is best for your son or daughter, we are attempting to individualize our attendance procedures. Please express to us which of the following procedures you would like for us to use with them regarding the reporting of absences. We will mark the records accordingly, notify each of their teachers of your desires, and do our best to follow through according to your wishes. If this form is not returned, we will follow Category 2.

\* \* \* \* \*

CATEGORY 1--I feel that \_\_\_\_\_ should be completely responsible for his/her own attendance and for the consequences of any problem created. Please do *NOT* contact me about the problems other than severe illness, injury, or withdrawal from enrollment in school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

CATEGORY 2--I believe that \_\_\_\_\_ should handle most judgmental situations and negotiate solutions to most problems on his/her own without my involvement. Please contact me *ONLY* if his/her actions seem not to justify this. I wish to be notified *ONLY* when the conduct or attendance is creating a problem for him/her or for the smooth functioning of the class or of the school. This notification will occur *BEFORE* the problem becomes too serious to solve. I will notify the school of any circumstances beyond the student's control (such as illness or family emergency) which would prevent attendance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

CATEGORY 3--It is my belief that \_\_\_\_\_ should be present for every class on every day that is scheduled unless I have notified the school otherwise. I want to be notified by school personnel as soon as is reasonable (usually the following day) after the absence or tardiness occurs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Business Phone

Other contact in case these fail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone [99:28-29]



## ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Alexandria, Virginia)

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21, 1975

TRUANCY CONTROL PROGRAM  
DROPS ABSENTEE RATE IN ALEXANDRIA

The truancy control program launched last month by the Alexandria Police Department and the city school administration in an effort to put the out-of-school youth back in the classroom has already reduced the absentee rate in the public school system, according to figures just released by school officials.

Police began on Oct. 6 picking up school-age juveniles frequenting shopping centers, parking lots, and residential streets, and returning them directly to their schools.

School attendance figures show that the citywide absentee rate for the month of October was six percent, down three percent from October of 1974. The absentee rate at the secondary level dropped significantly during the same time period, from thirteen percent to eight percent, while the city's elementary schools showed a slight drop of 6 percent to 5 percent.

In the eighteen school days between Oct. 6 and Oct. 31, a total of 51 students were returned to their schools by police officers, an average of almost three per day. In all cases but one, students returned to their schools were first-time offenders. One student was brought back to school on two occasions.

School officials and Alexandria's Commonwealth Attorney have maintained that after a third violation, the case will be thoroughly examined and charges may be filed against the parent as well as the student. Under the Code of Virginia, truancy is regarded as a misdemeanor offense in which parents can be charged for neglect.

Police officials have also been hopeful the truancy program would reduce the number of daylight burglaries committed by juveniles. Figures show that 44 percent fewer juveniles were arrested for burglaries in September and October of this year than the same period in 1974.

School Supt. Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ notes that school administrators have been meeting recently with police officers, probation officers of the Juvenile Court, and other city agencies in an effort to determine the reasons for truancy and other means of prevention.

"We feel that this truancy program will be particularly effective in reaching the borderline cases, the student who might otherwise become a chronic truant," acknowledges Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. "Whereas we realize this program will not completely solve the truancy problem, we do believe it's a step in the right direction and an effort to discourage other students from becoming truants."

Alexandria's absentee rate in 1974 was 12 percent systemwide, and 15 percent at the secondary level, both figures school officials considered were too high. October's absentee rate of 6 percent was the public school system's lowest in more than five years.

## ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Continued)

Alexandria City Public Schools  
Absentee Rates  
7/1/76

Monthly Absentee Rates

<u>1974-1975</u>				<u>1975-1976</u>			
	<u>ELEMENTARY</u>	<u>SECONDARY</u>	<u>ALL GRADES</u>		<u>ELEMENTARY</u>	<u>SECONDARY</u>	<u>ALL GRADES</u>
Sept.	4%	11%	7%	Sept.	4%	7%	6%
Oct.	6%	13%	9%	Oct.	5%	8%	7%
Nov.	7%	14%	10%	Nov.	6%	9%	7%
Dec.	7%	17%	12%	Dec.	8%	11%	10%
Jan.	10%	17%	13%	Jan.	8%	10%	9%
Feb.	8%	15%	12%	Feb.	9%	12%	11%
Mar.	8%	16%	12%	Mar.	7%	10%	8%
Apr.	7%	14%	10%	Apr.	8%	12%	10%
May	7%	16%	11%	May	7%	11%	9%
June	7%	16%	11%	June	9%	10%	9%

Cumulative Absentee Rates: 1971-1976

	<u>ELEMENTARY</u>	<u>SECONDARY</u>	<u>ALL GRADES</u>
1975-76	7%	10%	8%
1974-75	9%	16%	11%
1973-74	8%	15%	10%
1972-73	7%	12%	9%
1971-72	8%	11%	9%
1970-71	8%	10%	9%

(Nationally, absenteeism due to illness normally constitutes 5% of the total school population.)

# E X 9

## THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

In an attempt to halt a rising absenteeism rate, the Philadelphia Public Schools have set up special attendance teams to help poor attenders back into the classroom by developing and promoting new programs to encourage regular attendance. These attendance teams consist of a principal, school nurse, school-community coordinator, a teacher, home and school visitor, and a resource person in the community. [96:70] The attendance programs described below represent only a few of the many ways in which Philadelphia schools are tackling the absentee problem.

### Attendance Improvement Program at Joseph C. Ferguson Elementary School

The staff at Ferguson (an inner-city school with a 58 percent black, 40 percent Puerto Rican, and 2 percent white population) launched an inter-class race for perfect attendance--the "Bus Attend-A-Graph Race." Charts were developed to plot each class' progress, with tow trucks assigned to locate and help classes with sagging attendance. Banners were awarded to class winners at each grade level. The local news media, both English and Spanish, informed the community about the



## THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA (Continued)

program. Attendance improved to 89 percent by the end of one semester, after three races had been run, a 4 percent increase over the same two months of the preceding year. Attendance has continued to climb since then. At the year's end, the class with the best attendance record received special certificates and had a group picture taken. The school sent letters of commendation to those in the community who helped promote the program, while a "Dailygram" helped the staff keep up-to-date on the program's progress. [96]

Attendance Lottery at Thomas Junior High

The "Attendance Lottery", an ingenious program devised by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, faculty member of Thomas Junior High, has captured the imagination of many of our students. (Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is studying for his graduate degree in Administration and has elected to do his practicum in the field of attendance.)

The following flyer was distributed to the students:

## THE GREAT ATTENDANCE LOTTERY RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. A day will be chosen at random several times a month.
2. All classes with 100% attendance, both boys and girls, will win.
3. The winning classes will be awarded a special prize.
4. The special prize will be awarded at a "100% Attendance Lottery Winners Party" which will take place on a Tuesday afternoon.
5. The lucky day will be announced on a Tuesday morning.

An Attendance Committee comprised primarily of students has been busily engaged in providing publicity, ironing out the details of the awards parties and generally promoting the concept of perfect attendance.

Inasmuch as the dates chosen remain a mystery until their announcement, the incentive to attend daily is high. For who knows, the very day Johnny elects to stay home may be "Lottery Day." [116:1]

W. C. Bryant School Attendance Team

The William Cullen Bryant School located at 60th and Cedar Ave. has a very active Attendance Advisory Team. Among its members are the Crossing Guards. After leaving their posts of duty they, along with the Community Coordinator, volunteer many hours checking on the lateness of children. Each Crossing Guard is assigned special grade sections on a rotating basis. If a child is late more than three times, a post card is sent to the parents requesting a conference. Each child not late in an entire report period will be presented with a certificate. Each classroom not having any lateness will be presented with a class trophy purchased by the Home and School Association. Due to their efforts lateness in the school has been reduced from 50 to 60 per day to less than five per day. The Attendance Advisory Team under the sponsorship of the Home and School Association will be taking the students who have never been absent or late to lunch at the end of the third report period. [116:1-2]

Noteworthy Progress at Steel School

Due to the concentrated efforts of the principal, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, home and school visitor, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, and the school staff, the attendance percentages at Steel School have risen dramatically. Last year's percentages were noteworthy, and this year there have been even more impressive increases.

<u>Attendance Percentages</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>
September	83	85
October	90	93
November	87	91
December	86	90

[116:2]

## THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA (Continued)

Are You a P.O.D. Person?

Becoming a P.O.D. PERSON (Present On Time Daily) is a status eagerly sought by the students of the D. N. Fell and A. S. Jenks elementary schools in District 3.

For each month of perfect attendance, the student receives a charmingly illustrated Peanuts-type attendance sticker which proclaims "I AM A P.O.D. PERSON." There are ten different drawings, so that perfect attendance for the entire school year entitles the pupil to a complete set. (Our special thanks to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Language Arts Consultant in District #3 and devoted friend of the attendance staff, who also doubles as sort of illustrator in residence for the district and who is responsible for designing the ten P.O.D. PERSONS stickers.)

In addition, students with five months of perfect attendance will be awarded a special surprise treat, courtesy of the Home and School Association.

And for those who have managed ten months of perfect attendance, an unusual treat is in order. Each of these students will be invited to escort his parent or guardian to a special "P.O.D. PARENTS LUNCHEON" where these parents will be honored for their commitment to school attendance. [116:3]

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## NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS (New Orleans, Louisiana)

### PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE AND REDUCE DROPOUTS

With funding through a special appropriation of the Louisiana legislature, the New Orleans Public Schools launched an intensive "program to improve attendance and reduce dropouts." Three different components were involved: TRAC--Total Reduction of Absenteeism of Children, Intervention Rooms, and GRASP--An Alternative High School.

TRAC encompassed ten secondary schools with excessively high absenteeism rates. Teachers, administrators, and counselors in each school received daily computerized attendance data. With this information, administrators contacted parents after every student absence and followed up on chronic nonattenders; teachers conferred with students who were shown to skip classes regularly. TRAC was able to reduce absenteeism by 6 percent in 1974-75 and 21 percent during the first half of 1975-76. [113:1-3]

Intervention Rooms provide relief from disruptive classroom behavior in five elementary and three middle/junior high schools. These rooms have both short- and long-range objectives. While disruptive students are allowed to "cool off" here temporarily before returning to class, the rooms' main purpose is the identification of disruptive students to effect changes in their behavior over time. An average of 420 children per school per month are involved in the program's group activities and individual counseling. Parents are invited to attend night workshops (with a baby-sitting service provided). A 27 percent reduction in suspensions occurred in the first year and 17 percent by the end of February 1976. [113:1, 4-5]

GRASP is an alternative high school for suspended students who need academic and behavioral improvement before returning to the regular classroom. Students receive individualized instruction daily in reading and math, in addition to a curriculum of social studies, language arts, science, and physical education. Weekly group meetings are scheduled with a social worker; a student-elected council provides opportunities for self-government. In 1975-76 absenteeism fell 31 percent and only three of the 93 students in the program have been suspended. Twenty students returned to a traditional school. [113:6]

Funding for these projects through the State of Louisiana has run out, but the Intervention Rooms since were picked up by Title XX of the Social Security Act and GRASP is now funded by the Orleans Parish School Board. A new program also was opened under Title XX--Adolescent Service Centers. Three centers servicing 22 middle/junior high schools offer remedial academic work and behavioral enhancement to students referred because of disruptive behavior, underachievement or



## NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Continued)

dropout and delinquency potential. Staffing at each center includes a psychologist, social worker, skills strategist, two aides, a clerk, and a part-time consulting psychiatrist. The program's success rate looks "remarkable"--59 of the 110 students admitted to the centers as of January 1977 have returned to their regular classes and almost all have made adjustments to school and their behavior. [94]

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## BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Baltimore, Maryland)

PROJECT AIM

After study groups met in 1972 and 1975 to discuss recommendations for reducing absenteeism, the Baltimore City Public Schools set up Project AIM--Attendance Information Monitoring--in March 1976. This pilot program, funded for one year by the Urban Services Agency, serviced three senior and nine junior high schools which had an average attendance rate of 71 percent. Twelve teams of 100 persons worked to send chronic absentees back to school by home visits, in-school conferences, letters, and telephoning. After students have returned to school, the AIM staff provides in-school assistance to alleviate educational problems by changing classes or programs or recommending the student to a resource class. Out-of-school help takes the form of tutorial programs offered in community resource centers. [114:1-3]

Data were gathered from Student Information Forms, which students completed when contacted by AIM workers, and Weekly Report Forms, which each AIM team member completed every week. Results of the program for March-June 1976 indicate that:

- Of the 12 schools in the program, only three increased their percentage of attendance and only one exceeded its goal. On the average, each school's attendance from December 1975-May 1976 decreased 1.7 percent.
- An "average" student contacted by AIM team members was:
  - a black male over 16
  - in the ninth grade general curriculum
  - living with one or both parents
  - moved at least three times since entering Baltimore City Public Schools
  - absent at least 61 days during 1975-76
  - absent because of dislike of school and lack of interest in school
  - spending his days away from school doing nothing, being with friends, or on the street.
- 14,000 cases were handled--more than 3,500 a month. AIM staff contacted more than 10,000 students and 7,000 parents. [114:10-11]


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COOPER HIGH SCHOOL (Robbinsdale, Minnesota)

ADVERTISING FOR ATTENDANCE

Teachers at Cooper High School ran this advertisement in local newspapers and the school district's newsletter to stimulate better attendance. The ad reportedly reached 100,000 people.




**STEPS  
TO  
SUCCESS**

are those  
that take your  
teenager to  
Cooper Senior  
High each day.

The first step  
to success is  
daily school  
attendance.

This advertisement was paid for by  
the faculty at Cooper Senior High  
School, Independent School District 281.



[102]

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CHICAGO WHITE SOX (Chicago, Illinois)

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FREE SOX TICKETS TO NORTHERN INDIANA STUDENTS

Conscientious students in Northern Indiana are being rewarded for their achievements with free White Sox tickets. Youngsters with a straight A average or perfect attendance for the first semester of the current school year are eligible to participate in this program.



## CHICAGO WHITE SOX (Continued)

Ticket request forms are being distributed to participating schools, and students who qualify will receive these forms from their school principals. Pupils will be able to choose two of the twelve selected games listed below and will receive two free tickets for each game:

Sun., May 15	1:15 P.M.	Cleveland
Thu., May 19	7:30 P.M.	Kansas City
Wed., June 1	7:30 P.M.	Baltimore
Thu., June 23	1:15 P.M.	California
Sat., July 2	1:15 P.M.	Minnesota
Wed., July 13	5:30 P.M.	Toronto*
Wed., July 27	7:30 P.M.	Detroit
Thu., Aug. 4	7:30 P.M.	Texas
Mon., Aug. 8	7:30 P.M.	Seattle
Sun., Aug. 28	1:15 P.M.	Milwaukee
Sat., Sept. 3	7:30 P.M.	Baltimore
Sun., Sept. 18	12:30 P.M.	California*

\* Doubleheader

The Chicago Tribune has sponsored the White Sox Straight A Program since its inception in 1967; and Interlake, Inc., a Chicago-based diversified company became co-sponsor two years ago. In the last ten years over 600,000 students have enjoyed White Sox games at Comiskey Park as a reward for their school efforts.

"It's really a great program," says Sox Owner Bill Veeck. "That's why we're expanding it this year to include fifteen Illinois counties as well as Northern Indiana." An estimated 100,000 pupils are expected to participate in the 1977 White Sox Straight A Program.

## E 14 MADISON HIGH SCHOOL (Portland, Oregon)

### FOCUS PROGRAM

The Portland Public Schools received the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Title III "Educational Pacesetter" award for 1974 for its FOCUS program, a school within a school, at Madison High School. FOCUS encompasses 100 students with low achievement and attendance rates and/or behavioral problems. The curriculum, so flexible that it is revamped monthly by students and staff, revolves around five study areas: (1) Communication Labs--reading, writing, speech, etc.; (2) Analysis Labs--science and math; (3) Values Labs; (4) Realities Labs--a survey of life-as-it-is in economics, politics, and employment; and (5) nonacademic electives. The main target is the affective realm, emphasizing valuing and self-concept improvement. One part-time and five full-time teachers run the program. Data collected on the effectiveness of FOCUS reveal that students' behavior, self-concept, achievement, and attendance all improved during the time examined. In the case of attendance, 53 percent of the students enrolled in FOCUS were "poor attenders" (absent 12.5 percent or more from school). After the year studied, 70.7 percent improved their attendance rates. [111]

## E 15 ANAHEIM HIGH SCHOOL (Anaheim, California)

### LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM

The Learning Center Program, a school-within-a-school, offers activity-centered and project-oriented courses in traditional subject areas for poor achieving and attending students. The four teachers in the program seek to provide enthusiasm for learning and flexibility in dealing with class grouping, decisionmaking, student conferences, and the like. Students' attitudes and opinions have improved and students enrolled in the program earned more academic credit than in

## ANAHEIM HIGH SCHOOL (Continued)

the previous year. Of the 60 students who stayed in the program for the entire 1973-74 school year, 75 percent improved their attendance "to some degree." In one year, days absent decreased from 2,237 to 1,432. [125]

# E 16

## X LIVONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Livonia, Michigan)

### ALPHA PROGRAM

Begun in September 1972, ALPHA (Alternative Learning Program for the High School Age) also seeks to encourage dissatisfied high school students enrolled in the Livonia Public Schools. To keep the program heterogeneous, half of the students in ALPHA are chronic nonattenders with the other half randomly chosen from others applying. Credits are earned for volunteer work in the community, work experience, regular high school classes, independent study, and the ALPHA Workshop. Teachers and students contract for credit in independent study classes; traditional letter grades are given only in the high school courses. All students must attend the ALPHA Workshop, the core of the program, a two-hour-a-day, five-day-a-week class emphasizing values clarification, goal setting, and group and individual problem solving. All concerned--students, parents, teachers, and administrators--are highly supportive of the program. Evaluation of ALPHA has shown that the program's objectives have led to improvement in students' self-esteem and attendance. [120]



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The following bibliography is based on a search of published and unpublished literature. All the entries relate to student absenteeism, although not all are cited in the text. For the reader's convenience, the bibliography is divided into two parts: the first part lists works dealing primarily with research on attendance and the second contains references that focus on attendance policies and programs used in the schools. Sources describing both research and programs are listed in Part I: Research.

Where possible, addresses and prices are given to expedite the ordering of desired materials. Documents for which ERIC Document (ED) numbers are given can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, Computer Microfilm International Corporation, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. The price schedule for documents is as follows: *Hard Copy*: 1-25 pages, \$1.67; 26-50 pages, \$2.06; 51-75 pages, \$3.50; 76-100 pages, \$4.67. (Add \$1.34 for each additional 25-page increment or fraction thereof.) *Microfiche*: 1-5 fiche, 83¢; 6 fiche, \$1.00; 7 fiche, \$1.16; 8 fiche, \$1.33. (Add 17¢ for each additional fiche.)

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